

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Florida for making the important points he made on the question of energy and how difficult this challenge is for the country and that the sloganeering will not do it. He made a very compelling argument about that, which we need to hear in the Senate.

I wish to talk today for a few moments about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, known by the acronym LIHEAP—L-I-H-E-A-P.

For those who follow the Senate and watch or listen, you know we use a lot of acronyms. I know they can get a little tiresome. But this particular acronym stands for a program that works. There is no debate about that. There is no question about whether this program works. It has worked for years. It has support in both parties—not enough support, I don't think, on the other side of the aisle. I will get to that in a moment.

But when we talk about that acronym LIHEAP, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, we are talking about a program which this winter can literally mean—and will literally mean—life or death for some Americans. There is no drama and overstatement in that whatsoever because unless we do the right thing on LIHEAP this year, people are going to freeze to death. It is as simple as that.

I commend a lot of my colleagues: Senator SANDERS has been a stalwart on this issue, who has spoken on the floor and been a leading advocate; Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, and so many other colleagues from the Northeast-Midwest coalition who have fought for increased energy assistance funding every year.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of the bill. It has a very simple title but very important: Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act. That is what the act is. The bill meets a critical and fundamental need by providing an additional \$2.53 billion in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program assistance for this fiscal year.

It raises the funding to the fully authorized level of \$5.1 billion. For Pennsylvania, that means that if this bill is passed, our State will get an additional—an additional—\$210 million. If there is ever a time the people of our State will need it, it will be this winter. Similar to a lot of States in the Northeast, we have long winters. We have a lot of vulnerable people: the second highest population over the age of 65, a very large rural population that will be adversely impacted if we do not get help and extra money for LIHEAP.

We have in our State home energy assistance grants that help vulnerable people, the needy. Almost 33.5 percent of the grants help older citizens. Almost 30 percent of the grants help disabled Pennsylvanians. And 18.5 percent of the grants help young children.

These are people who need the help the most. They are vulnerable in the cold months that are just around the

corner for all of America and for Pennsylvania. These are the people who made up the 1,000 who died of hypothermia in their homes between 1999 and 2002—1,000 people dying of hypothermia in just about 3 to 4 years. All of those deaths—every one of them—was preventable. LIHEAP is the cornerstone to providing assistance that keeps people healthy and safe.

LIHEAP is widely recognized as effective and successful, which is why the bill we are considering, and that I am a cosponsor of, is cosponsored by 49 Senators in total from both sides of the aisle. We still have some problems, which we will talk about later.

The bill is necessary because LIHEAP has been chronically underfunded—historically, at a rate of less than half the amount authorized.

For people out there who watch our discussions, we know it is easy to authorize. It is harder to make sure you appropriate what you authorize. This is one of those examples where the authorization looked real good, but the appropriation does not meet the authorization part of our legislation.

So the need has never been greater. We have all talked a lot about the struggle of working families who are forced to choose between the need for heat and the need to eat. But the situation has gotten much worse. This is not news to people who are living through this and struggling in the nightmare of foreclosure, the difficulty with watching wages flatten out, even as you are working harder, and your food prices are going up, your gasoline prices are going up, college tuition is going up, health care payments are going up. I could add more to that. Families are being forced to choose between heating and air-conditioning, food, medicine, gasoline, and mortgage payments—all those difficult choices that our families are making.

Today, 15.6 million American families are at least 30 days behind on paying their utility bills. In Pennsylvania, terminations of home utility services are up over 51 percent.

According to a USA Today article, one of our energy companies in Pennsylvania has disconnected 168 percent more—168 percent more—homes than at this time last year.

So we have a major challenge in our State. The good news is that in Pennsylvania we have had over 400,000 families—households, I should say, in Pennsylvania—that have received assistance from LIHEAP this year. But that is less than half of the 800,000 that are eligible. There are 800,000 households in our State that are eligible. So we are happy LIHEAP has done such a good job of helping 400,000 households, but we have a doubling of that to 800,000 that are, in fact, eligible.

For those receiving assistance in Pennsylvania, the average grant was \$239, and it covered much less than a quarter of their need. So when people hear these big numbers, they will say: Oh, my goodness, the Federal Govern-

ment wants to increase the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program by \$2.5 billion. That sounds like a lot of money, doesn't it? Spread that out person by person. When it comes down to Pennsylvania, we are talking about assistance, at last count—this number is a few years old, but it is not much higher than this—of \$239. So if we increase it by several billion nationally, that means individual Pennsylvanians will get some help, but they are not going to be getting hundreds and hundreds of dollars more. They are going to be getting more than that \$239 or \$250 or \$260 in help. So it is not a lot when it comes to that person. But it means a lot to that individual person and their family.

Here is the scenario: In the dark of night, in the cold of winter, I do not want to have a Pennsylvanian or an American in their home freezing to death because a couple people in Washington did not think that \$2.53 billion was the right way to spend money—when we have an administration which sent a budget here for 2009 which had \$51 billion in tax cuts for people making over \$1 million and up. So for anyone listening, if you are a millionaire, a multimillionaire or a billionaire or beyond that, this administration sent us a budget this year that gave that tiny sliver of America a \$51 billion tax break.

Don't tell me we cannot afford a little bit of an increase for low-income home energy assistance, especially when older citizens are faced with the—"squeeze"—does not even begin to describe it—vice grip on their head, the nightmare of trying to pay for gasoline and food and oil in their tank, literally, to heat their homes. So we can afford this. Ten times over we can afford it.

I wish to conclude. When we have the situation of an older citizen or a young child who is living in a home that is not heated, or living without adequate nutrition, that child, as well as that older citizen, is harmed. The rate of growth and development are jeopardized. A child is sicker, they miss more school, and they do not do as well in class. A large percentage of LIHEAP energy assistance goes to not only older citizens but those with a disability. This is important because someone who is frail is more likely to be impacted by exposure if they are unable to pay to heat or cool their home.

So I hope we pass this legislation before we leave in August. Why should we wait? No one needs to have a crystal ball to know that in the cold months ahead of us, a lot of vulnerable people are going to be put at risk. So this is our chance to do something—not just to talk about it but to do something—that will provide immediate assistance to the most vulnerable in our society.

So I ask my colleagues to support the Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act, which will help our families.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.